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RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 3996
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 5292
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1368
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA PRIORITY 3422
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 1625
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 2642
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KATHMANDU 000859

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SUBJECT: CHIEF OF ARMY STAFF SAYS MAOISTS CAN'T BE TRUSTED

REF: KATHMANDU 858

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

11. (C) Chief of Army Staff General Katawal (COAS) told the Ambassador April 27 that the Maoists could not be trusted and stressed that the Nepal Army (NA) had to be kept intact. For law and order to be restored, a new Home Minister would have to be appointed. Katawal expressed his gratitude for U.S. assistance and emphasized that the NA was committed to democracy. The Ambassador informed the COAS that the 4,600 rifles, previously reserved for Nepal, were no longer available. While reiterating the NA's full support for democracy, Katawal noted that, if the Maoists tried to remove the monarchy before a Constituent Assembly were elected, the NA would be forced to act. The Ambassador urged caution. Katawal emphasized that the NA was under pressure from all sides: the Maoists, the Palace and parliamentary committees investigating human rights violations. Katawal downplayed the significance of the NA's participation in the King's trip to Dakshinkali Temple on Democracy Day. The Ambassador urged the NA to fully cooperate with the investigations of alleged past human rights abuses.

Maoists Can't be Trusted, Army Must Remain Intact

12. (C) On April 27, Chief of Army Staff General Katawal (COAS) told the Ambassador that the Maoists could not be trusted. He argued that the Maoists' history showed them to be completely unreliable. For that reason, the Nepal Army (NA) had to be kept intact for the time being. He stated that the situation right now was "quite serious," emphasizing that no law enforcement agency was currently operating in Nepal. Katawal quipped that everyone in the government acted as if they were in the "opposition," so, "who," he asked, "was governing the country?" The Ambassador informed the COAS that at a meeting earlier the same day (reftel), he had stressed to the Prime Minister that the Government of Nepal (GON) had to enforce law and order. Katawal responded that this would require a new Home Minister. The Ambassador agreed.

Nepal Army Grateful for U.S. Assistance

13. (C) Katawal expressed his gratitude to the Ambassador for continuing U.S. assistance for the NA in the form of non-lethal supplies and training. He said that Nepal looks to the U.S. for support in the development of its democratic institutions and emphatically reaffirmed his loyalty to democracy. The Ambassador told Katawal that he wanted to ensure good follow-on training in the coming year for NA officials.

Rifles No Longer Available

14. (C) The Ambassador reported to General Katawal that U.S. Government had sent the 4,600 rifles being held in storage for Nepal to Lebanon. But, the Ambassador added that he had received assurances that if the NA needed weapons in a crisis, the United States would act as quickly as possible to get them. In response, Katawal voiced his frustration with the inaction of Prime Minister Koirala to secure the rifles and his concern that, no matter how quickly the U.S. acted to provide arms in an emergency, it might be too late.

NA Will React to Premature Declaration of Republic

15. (C) Katawal told the Ambassador that the NA army fully supported democracy, but, if the Maoists tried to remove the monarchy before the Constituent Assembly election, the NA would be forced to "make (their) beliefs known." The COAS

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emphasized that the Interim Constitution left it to an elected Constituent Assembly to determine the fate of the monarch. He stressed that if the Interim Parliament removed King Gyanendra before an election had taken place, it would not be acting on a mandate from the people. Katawal stated that the first goal of the NA was to protect the integrity and sovereignty of the State. The Ambassador cautioned Katawal that the NA needed to be very careful.

Maoist Integration Into the NA: A Bad Idea

16. (C) Katawal said that he had discussed Maoist integration into the NA with Indian Ambassador Mukherjee. Katawal stated that he had taken the stand in the conversation that it would be suicidal for the NA to accept a large number of Maoist combatants into its ranks. He described them as trained only to loot and intimidate. The Ambassador noted that he had had a similar conversation with the Prime Minister.

Human Rights Investigations

17. (C) Katawal complained that the NA was under pressure from parliamentary committees investigating human rights abuses. The General emphasized that the NA could only cooperate if the process followed the law. The Ambassador encouraged Katawal to cooperate closely with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal. He stressed that transparency was the best response and would eventually strengthen the NA.

Katawal Feeling Pressure From All Sides

18. (C) Katawal said that he feels like "everyone wants a piece" of him. He explained that he had told the Maoists that he would not meet with them until they abandoned violence, demonstrated a genuine commitment to democracy and agreed to a plan for the future of the monarchy. The COAS also explained that the Palace was annoyed with him because he no longer went to functions there or called on the King.

Katawal said that he had clarified to the King that he had stopped visiting in order to avoid trouble for the monarchy and to avoid accusations that the NA and the monarchy were plotting together to overthrow the government. Katawal admitted that he had encouraged the Prime Minister to convince the King to abdicate.

King's Dakshinkali Show

¶9. (C) The Ambassador reproached Katawal about the NA providing security for the King's trip to Dakshinkali Temple on Democracy Day, the presence of an NA honor guard, and the NA band playing the old "royal" national anthem. (Note: April 24 is now celebrated as Democracy Day in remembrance of the King's overthrow on April 24, 2006. End Note) Katawal acknowledged that it was unfortunate that the King's trip occurred on Democracy Day and defended the NA's actions as part of tradition. He stated that no one had ordered the NA not to attend or play the anthem or shoot off rifles as the animal sacrifices were made, so the NA did as it had always done. The Ambassador noted that the NA should be more cautious. The COAS stressed that the NA had not given the King a 21-gun salute, as the Maoists had charged. Katawal acknowledged that the Maoists were looking for an excuse to attack the Prime Minister and stated that he had told the Prime Minister on a number of occasions that this was the Maoists' plan.

Comment

¶10. (C) In light of growing support for a republic and the uncertainty of an election any time soon, the Nepal Army may be faced with some tough choices. Chief of Army Staff Katawal implied to the Ambassador that, if the Interim

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Parliament or the Interim Government were to abolish the monarchy before a Constituent Assembly were elected, the NA would somehow act. Presumably, Katawal worries that the Maoists would follow a successful attempt to abolish the monarchy with a push for massive restructuring of the NA. Such a push would make sense for the Maoists: many in Nepal share the Maoist view that the NA has served in the past as the most important pillar of the monarchy. And purging the army would remove the last major obstacle to the Maoists' seizing power. That said, Katawal needs to be very cautious or he will end up helping the Maoists. Katawal knows the Maoists are looking for a way to attack the Prime Minister; now is not the time for the NA to still be playing the King's song.
MORIARTY